

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 HAVANA 00258 311718Z  
ACTION ARA-14

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FM USINT HAVANA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1065  
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA  
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L HAVANA 0258

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PDEV, MILI, ET, SO, UR, CU  
SUBJECT: CUBANS AND SOVIETS COMMENT ON ETHIOPIA

1. SUMMARY: FIDELISTA CUBAN FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL IN CHARGE OF AFRICAN AFFAIRS APPEARS TO TAKE HARDER LINE ON ETHIOPIA THAN SOVIET AMBASSADOR AND HIS OWN VICE-MINISTER OF FOREIGN RELATIONS WHO IS OLD MOSCOW-LINE COMMUNIST.  
END SUMMARY.

2. IN COURSE OF DINNER GIVEN BY BRITISH AMBASSADOR, JANUARY 27, ACTING USINT CHIEF GLASSMAN HAD OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS ETHIOPIA BRIEFLY WITH SOVIET AMBASSADOR NIKITA TOLUBEYEV (MEMBER OF CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE), CUBAN VICE-MINISTER OF FOREIGN RELATIONS (AND EX-PSP, MOSCOW-LINE COMMUNIST) PELEGRIN TORRAS--USINT'S ASSIGNED SENIOR POINT OF CONTACT, AND OSCAR ORAMAS, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN RELATIONS (MINREX) DIRECTOR OF AFRICAN AND MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS (FIRST CUBAN AMBASSADOR TO ANGOLA AND AN ULTRA-REVOLUTIONARY FIDELISTA). WHILE NONE WERE WILLING TO GO INTO DETAIL AND ALL AGREED ON ESSENTIALS, SOME INTRIGUING NUANCES EMERGED.

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PAGE 02 HAVANA 00258 311718Z

3. ON ISSUE OF SOMALI TROOP WITHDRAWAL FROM ETHIOPIA, ALL THREE SAID IT WAS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY FOR PEACE. ORAMAS, HOWEVER, APPEARED TO EMPHASIZE NEED TO EJECT SOMALIS BY FORCE. TOLUBEYEV, SEPARATELY, WHILE STATING THAT MENGISTU NEEDED TO OBTAIN SOMALI WITHDRAWAL IN ORDER TO NEGOTIATE, SAID IT WOULD BE MISTAKE TO "PRESSURE" SOMALIS. TOLUBEYEV SAID THAT

SOMALI LEADERS HAD SLANDERED USSR, BUT THAT SOVIET UNION RECOGNIZES THAT IT STILL MAINTAINS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH AND HAS FRIENDS IN, SOMALIA. FOR THESE REASONS, HE SAID, CONSIDERATION HAS TO BE GIVEN TO PROVIDING APPROPRIATE POLITICAL INCENTIVES TO ENCOURAGE SOMALIS TO NEGOTIATE. WHEN ASKED ABOUT CUBAN POSITION ON THIS POINT, TOLUBEYEV REPLIED THAT, "FIDEL HAS ENOUGH EXPERIENCE TO KNOW THAT A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT IS REQUIRED". (COMMENT: TOLUBEYEV MADE THIS OBSERVATION ON CASTRO'S POSITION WITH A NOTICEABLE LACK OF SELF-ASSURANCE. WE WONDER WHETHER IN THIS CASE, AS WITH SOME OTHERS WE HAVE OBSERVED, THE CUBANS HAVE NOT BEEN FULLY CANDID WITH SOVIETS REGARDING THEIR INTENTIONS.)

4. IN AN ASIDE ON POSSIBLE FUTURE ROLE FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING FORCES IN ETHIOPIA, TOLUBEYEV APPARENTLY FOCUSING ON A POSSIBLE UN PRESENCE, SAID THAT THERE ARE ALREADY UN FORCES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND CYPRUS AND THAT YET ANOTHER FORCE WOULD SEEM EXCESSIVE.

5. ON THE ISSUE OF POSSIBLE GESTURES TO SOMALIS, CUBAN VICE-MINISTER PELEGRIN TORRAS, IN PRESENCE OF TOLUBEYEV, SAID THAT MENGISTU BACKS AUTONOMY FOR BOTH ERITREA AND OGADEN. ON OTHER HAND, ORAMAS, SEPARATELY, DECLINED TO MAKE SUCH AN AFFIRMATION, AND ADDED THAT WESTERNERS SHOULD TALK TO MENGISTU, NOT CUBANS, IF THEY ARE INTERESTED IN DETERMINING POLITICAL POSSIBILITIES IN ETHIOPIA. TOLUBEYEV  
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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 HAVANA 00258 311718Z

ON OTHER HAND, SAID THAT, ONCE A CEASEFIRE COULD TAKE HOLD AND SOMALI TROOPS ARE WITHDRAWN, PARTIES (UNSPECIFIED) COULD SIT AROUND TABLE AND DISCUSS WHETHER ERITREA AND OGADEN SHOULD FIGURE IN LARGER FEDERATION OR RECEIVE FULL AUTONOMY WITHIN ETHIOPIA (HE CITED THE EXAMPLE OF SOVIET "AUTONOMOUS REPUBLICS" AND "NATIONAL OKRUGS"). HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT SUBSTANTIAL SELF-GOVERNANCE FOR ERITREA AND OGADEN, ALBEIT WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF ETHIOPIA, WAS ESSENTIAL AND DESIRABLE TO SECURE END OF INSURGENCY AND, IN CASE OF OGADEN, SOMALI ACQUIESCENCE IN POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. (COMMENT: ORAMAS' ATTRIBUTION OF POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY TO MENGISTU IS CONSISTENT WITH THE "BLANK CHECK" THAT HAVANA PURPORTS TO HAVE GIVEN TO NETO REGARDING ANGOLAN POLITICAL SOLUTIONS AND TROOP DISPOSITIONS. CERTAIN FIDELISTAS--THOSE LESS SUBSERVIENT TO, AND IDENTIFIED WITH, MOSCOW--SEEK TO DIFFERENTIATE CUBAN POLICY OF UNQUESTIONABLY SUPPORTING FAVORED LEADERS FROM THAT OF THE SOVIETS WHICH, AS SUGGESTED BY TOLUBEYEV'S STATEMENTS, TENDS TO FAVOR IMPOSED POLITICAL SOLUTIONS.)

6. BOTH TORRAS AND ORAMAS DENIED, ALBEIT NOT VERY STRENUOUSLY, THAT CUBANS HAD CALLED UP MORE MEN FOR MILITARY SERVICE IN ETHIOPIA IN LAST FEW WEEKS.

TORRAS, IN PRESENCE OF SOVIET AMBASSADOR, ALSO DIFFIDENTLY REPEATED LINE THAT THERE ARE NO CUBAN COMBAT UNITS IN ETHIOPIA. TOLUBEYEV DID NOT REAFFIRM TORRAS' STATEMENTS. (COMMENT: INCREDIBLY, CUBAN PRESS-FOR EXAMPLE, GRANMA, JANUARY 28--CONTINUES TO PRINT ETHIOPIAN STATEMENTS THAT THERE ARE NO FOREIGN MILITARY PERSONNEL IN ETHIOPIA. DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS HERE, INCLUDING USINT, AGREE THAT SOME ADDITIONAL MILITARY CALL-UP FOR ETHIOPIA TOOK PLACE IN MID-JANUARY. CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION CORRESPONDENT--AND LONG-TIME CUBAN RESIDENT--LIONEL MARTIN REPORTS THAT LATEST RUMORS ON JANUARY CALL-UP CITE FIGURE OF 4000. SPANISH EMBASSY, CITING UNSPECIFIED CUBAN SOURCES, HAS RECENTLY GIVEN FIGURE OF 6000. USINT HAS NO WAY OF SUBSTANTIATING THESE RUMORS.)

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PAGE 04 HAVANA 00258 311718Z

7. COMMENT: WHILE TOLUBEYEV APPEARED MERELY TO ECHO MOSCOW'S FAMILIAR POSITION ON A DESIRABLE ETHIOPIAN-SOMALI POLITICAL SOLUTION, HIS EMPHASIS ON NOT "PRESSURING" SOMALIA APPEARED TO CONTRAST WITH ORAMAS' SUGGESTIONS THAT SOMALIS SHOULD BE FORCED OUT OF OGADEN AND THAT MENGISTU EXCLUSIVELY SHOULD DEFINE BOUNDS OF ANY GESTURES TO SOMALIS. WE WONDER, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF CASTRO'S STATEMENT TO PONIATOWSKI THAT HE HAD PUSHED SOVIETS FROM POSITION OF BALANCING BETWEEN SOMALIA AND ETHIOPIA TO POSTURE OF ONESIDED SUPPORT OF ETHIOPIA (SEE 77 HAVANA 807) WHETHER SOVIETS CONTINUE TO HAVE STRONGER URGE THAN CUBANS TO CONCILIATE SOMALIS.  
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## Message Attributes

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